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II.—THE VENDIDÂD AS TRANSLATED BY M. DARMESTETER.

The fourth volume of Max Müller's edition of the Sacred Books of the East contains part of M. Darmesteter's English translation of the Zend-Avesta, namely, the Vendidâd, prefaced by a general introduction to the work. The Vendidâd is not, perhaps, the book of the Avesta to which the student of religions attaches most value; but the variety of its contents makes it the most explicit, though not most reliable, witness to the facts and drift of Mazdeism. It is composed chiefly of details, as tedious as they are minute, respecting the ceremonial of purification, a matter of great moment to the Mazdean, on whose timorous faith the contact of the world entailed a perpetual peril of pollution; but breaking in upon this theme, and otherwise not closely connected with it, are found various fragments of an interesting nature, as, for instance, the geographical data of the 1st Fargard, the legend of Yima and of the deluge (II), the almost epic narrative of Zoroaster's contest with Ahriman (XIX), some snatches of poetical strains (III), and, besides, many passages which arrest the attention by the light they cast on the private life and social habits of the early Iranians (VII, XII, XVIII, etc.). These episodes are certainly better calculated than the sober fervor of the old hymns to win favor with the public at large; and if it was any part of M. Darmesteter's plan to reach this wider circle, we must admit that no translation is better qualified than his to accomplish this result. Anquetil-Duperron's version, which once embodied all that European scholarship knew of the Avesta, seems to us of to-day written in an unintelligible jargon; Spiegel's version, which was published nearly twenty years ago and supplanted Anquetil's, and that which an eminent Belgian scholar, M. de Harlez, has just given to the public in a very complete work on the Avesta, are by no means deficient in qualities of style, yet their scrupulous literalness betrays the scientific preoccupations of their authors to a much greater degree than M. Darmesteter's. In truth, no Zend scholar excels M. Darmesteter in the art of bringing out the salient features of the text, and of lending to the awkward and involved diction of the

original the order and elegance of modern writing. Fully to appreciate this merit, one must pick out in Spiegel's version one of the many passages which stand there like algebraic equations bristling with unknown quantities, and then suddenly turn to the almost transparent clearness of the same passage in M. Darmesteter's rendering (conf. I, 53-58; III, 44-72, etc.). To be sure, recent labors have done away with the opinion, current in a period not far remote, that the Mazdean writers thought and composed by fits and starts and according to mental processes unheard of among other Indo-European nations; but the literary features of M. Darmesteter's work go even beyond the simple requirements of a version. One might almost suggest that the studied simplicity and regular rhythm of his sentences cast too uniform a drapery over a book which is marked by great unevenness, and that his seldom dimmed clearness disguises failings of the text too obvious to be forgotten; and yet no one could earnestly take M. Darmesteter to task for being, in point of mental resources and style, better equipped than his originals.

These, however, and other equally attractive features, are but the outward merits of the work; the inner worth is that with which we have to do. Indeed, the more popular a work of this kind promises to be, the more deeply it ought to be searched by all interested in the texts. Translations, above all translations of the Avesta, are long-lived. The errors they may convey are not so easily eradicated as spread, and may prejudice not only the studies immediately depending on them, but also the drift of public opinion. Not to go very far, Mr. J. Fiske, in a recent article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, quoted the opening verses of the Vendidad in Spiegel's version, apparently unconscious that it is now seventeen years since the German scholar recanted that rendering in his Commentary.

The simplest way to bring to light the merits or failings of a translation is, usually, to compare it with others. This proceeding is open in the present case to an objection. It might be curious and often amusing to point out the discrepancies between Spiegel's version, for example, and M. Darmesteter's, but it would be also unfair to the older scholar. In so new a science as ours, a score of years tells heavily on books. Spiegel's work appears to us strewn with errors for the same reason that a newly cleared field is dotted with stumps, and we must not forget that the clearing itself was no small task. Besides, Spiegel has modified his view in many points in his Commentary. With more recent versions the case is differ-

ent; and I might find here a fit occasion to do justice to the meritorious labors of M. de Harlez¹ and to the spirited renderings of Geldner in Kuhn's *Zeitschrift*; but in reality we have to deal with something more than a question of relative merit, for problems of scientific import are involved in comparison with which clearness and force are of little moment. The interpretation of the Avesta is still made up, in great part, of suggestions which science slowly corroborates or invalidates, and in a science of promises it is not so much the results we must consider as the promises themselves and the guarantees behind them; in other words, the methods used by the translators are even more important than the translations. In respect to this point M. Darmesteter's ready pen has much facilitated the task. The scope of his work did not allow him room for justificatory notes, but this lack is amply made up by the outspokenness of his Introduction, where we find not only very direct information touching his method, but the many axioms, suggestions, theories of large or small compass, which constitute the writer's convictions on the subject of Mazdeism. These theories are woven with the translation itself into so ingenious and close a fabric that it would be impossible to disentwine them, and his introductory statements must come in for as large a share in my criticisms as his translation. I might add, in a spirit of fairness, that though M. Darmesteter's statements are clothed with an absoluteness which courts opposition, his presentation of them is neither aggressive nor disparaging to other views, and that while endeavoring to give my objections all the force of which they are susceptible, I do not impugn his talents and the right a scholar has to convictions of his own.

Preliminarily and to clear off the ground, as it were, I wish to mention one of M. Darmesteter's surmises concerning the age of the Avesta. There can be no absolute objection to our believing with him, *a priori*, that although the Avesta is pre-Sassanian, some parts of it may have been written by the editors, that is as late as the IVth century of our era. The fact that this opinion opens a vast field of new conjectures is not, of course, an adverse proof. Nor is the fact that the Pahlavi version dates from that time an insuperable objection, though it is more plausible to admit a considerable

¹ The revised edition of this scholar's work reached me too late to be used extensively in this criticism. Besides it is too important a work to serve merely as a foil.

interval between the closing of the Mazdean books and the wants which brought forth the Pahlavi version and Commentaries. What is worth noticing is the evidence adduced. The argument is based on an axiom, a form of speech too much favored, perhaps, in this Introduction. "The ability to translate a dead language," he says (p. xxxvii), "is a good test of the ability to write in it," etc.; that is to say, since the editors knew how to edit the Avesta they knew how to write Zend and may have written Zend. This, however, is too quick a gait for us; for, as to those editors and first translators, it is believed by some that, let alone writing, they did not know how to read the Avesta, that they had lost the key to the grammar if not to the sense of their books and translated according to transmitted data. I venture then to say that this argument is forestalling a question which must be solved by something more than axiomatic maxims. From the hypothesis that they may have written to the statement that they did write, there is, as one might expect, a short step. M. Darmesteter alleges two passages as showing traces of a very late composition: the first in F. XVIII, 10, where Ahura Mazda speaks of the sham priest of the Mazdean faith: 'He who should set that man at liberty when bound in prison does no better deed than if he should flay a man alive,' etc. This anathema, M. Darmesteter comments, indicates a time when Mazdeism was a state religion and had to fight against heresy; it must therefore belong to Sassanian times. What impairs this reasoning is that the word *âzδ* rendered by 'prison,' means simply 'distress,' and the word rendered 'liberty' may mean 'cheer.' Indeed, these are the meanings he gives both words, respectively, in a verse preceding almost immediately the one in question, so that this passage, of his own showing, must mean: 'He who should bring that man from distress to joy does no better deed than if he flayed a man alive,' etc., a sense which is so tame that we should scruple to accept it even had we not another and better one to offer, namely: 'If he (the sham priest) should bring a man of mine (a believer) from distress to joy, he would do him no more good than if he should flay him alive,' etc., which amounts to saying that the benefit conferred by a false priest turns to evil.

It is likewise Ahura-Mazda who speaks in the second passage, F. IV, 46, seq.: 'Verily I say unto thee, O Spitama Zarathustra! the man who has a wife is far above him who begets no sons; he who keeps a house is far above him who has none; he who has children is far above the childless man; he who has riches is far above him who has none; and of two men, he who fills

himself with meat is filled with the good spirit much more than he who does not so,' etc. This passage also is susceptible of another rendering, but for the sake of brevity I will let it stand, and pass to M. Darmesteter's comments. 'We find in this passage,' he says, 'an illustration from the Avesta itself of the celebrated doctrines of the three sea's with which Mani had sealed the bosom, the hand and the mouth of his disciples' (xli). M. Darmesteter himself weakens the force of his ingenious suggestion by quoting in the foot-note (p. 46) the remark made by Herodotus eight centuries before Mani, that 'in Persia there are prizes given by the king to those who have most children.' It does not seem to us, however, that the correspondence between the two injunctions is as salient as our writer's words purport; it is still less apparent in Haug's and de Harlez's versions, and disappears entirely in the rendering, for us preferable to all others, outlined by Spiegel, so that M. Darmesteter's statement rests solely on M. Darmesteter's translation. We find a similar and clearer injunction in F. III, 33, there in its right connection, in the midst of a praise of agriculture, which a sort of metrical movement and rhyme mark out as belonging to the older strata of the Vendidâd: 'No one who does not eat has strength to do works of holiness, strength to do works of husbandry, strength to beget children.' Here the precept assumes the numeric form of the Manichean formula; but, at the same time, the internal coincidence fades away, which explains, perhaps, why our writer did not quote this wording. In reality, both the context and the passages bring to mind a doctrine more general and also more directly adverse to the favorite maxims of Mazdeism, namely, asceticism. In enjoining the pursuit of agriculture and cattle-raising as a holy work, the early books gave the note which was to be echoed by all following generations. It is not necessary to descend as far as the 3d or 4th century of our era to explain a conflict which must have risen repeatedly between Mazdean thrift, hallowed by the highest warrant, and the ascetic doctrines which spread so early over the East. A contemplative life must have been looked on by the believer as not only idle but impious. Which peculiar sect is meant is not a problem to be solved easily, yet I cannot but notice the words immediately preceding the passage quoted from F. IV. M. Darmesteter translates: 'Before the water and the blazing fire, let no one make bold to deny having received from his neighbor the ox or the garment' . . ., which is not only marked

doubtful in the foot-note, but is also out of all connection with the context. As none of the several suggestions offered is more apposite than this, I venture my own surmise: the word *aiwyô* instead of the dative plural of *ap*, 'water,' may be the same case of the demonstrative *aēm*, and the passage may mean: 'They have so stated in regard to the men *taptibyô* (or *taptaēibyô*) that one should not preach the renouncement to husbandry and cattle-tending.' This would be a becoming introduction to a praise of these occupations, and, at the same time, an allusion to some ascetic sect that had found its way from India to Iran and propagated the peculiar observances understood there under the name *tapas*. This rendering offers syntactical difficulties of its own, and, besides, so definite a clue ought not to be accepted too lightly; yet when a path has led so many away from the goal, it is but fit that a new one should be struck out.

Testimony which proves so refractory to M. Darmesteter's views cannot have imposed itself upon him; he must have sought for it. Indeed, the trained hand of the lawyer may be seen behind the depositions of the witnesses. If one asks what the point at stake is, I see but one possible answer: Decide that the editors knew how to write Zend and wrote part of the Avesta, and the question so momentous in Zend studies as to the value of native and traditional learning takes at once a new and unexpected turn.

The controversy bearing upon the relative worth of tradition and comparative philology in the interpretation of the texts is not due to the hasty temper of the controversialists, as one might think who had heard the clash of Zend polemics, but to the peculiar conditions under which our studies were born. The language of the Avesta was dead in a much deeper sense than the word ever had in regard to Sanskrit, and its deciphering almost entirely dependent on outer help. The first investigators, without puzzling themselves with hair-splitting distinctions of priority, laid their hands on all that was tributary to their object. They were as prompt to accept the data of native tradition as to welcome the method of comparison as soon as discovered; yet it was evident that as the latter was improving in accuracy and getting a keen edge, it would gradually push to the first place, and drive the other auxiliaries from the field after they had yielded their harvest. The conflict was precipitated by the impetuous personality of Haug, as much perhaps by his aggressive attitude in regard to prior researches as by the too absolute authority

he gave to the Vedas in purely Avestic matters. The failings of Haug's work and his ultimate adherence to Parsee tradition in its narrowest form show that he was hardly prepared to lead the movement which he initiated; yet, though by his aggression he forced several Zend scholars of high repute to accentuate the value of traditional help more than had previously occurred to them, he also brought others to realize the importance of his suggestions, and thus gave the study a new momentum. Since his death the controversy to which he was a party has lost much of its bitterness, and is chiefly evinced in the remarkable care which recent authors take to define their attitude accurately, and the efforts of some to bring tradition and comparison to pull together in the same harness. As for M. Darmesteter, no one could ride two horses more dexterously if we were to take his statements at a glance (Introd., p. xxviii). 'The Vedas,'—and by 'Vedas' he characterizes here and elsewhere the comparative method—'the Vedas,' he says, 'generally speaking, cannot help to discover matters of fact in the Avesta, but only to explain them when discovered by tradition . . . ; tradition gives the materials and comparison puts them in order; it is not possible to know the Avesta without the former or to understand it without the latter.' Nothing, indeed, could be more equitable. Only one might object that the writer is so intent on doing justice to the two witnesses that he forgets the real party in court, namely the Avesta itself, for fear, perhaps, that being called upon to testify it might incriminate itself. It would have impaired the brief elegance of his statement, but not its completeness, to say that there have been, and are yet, several scholars at work on the arduous task of eliciting, partly from outside comparison, but at this stage from the texts themselves, a grammar, a syntax, and a system of phonetics, which will not owe to the Vedas much more than the Vedas owe to other branches of the Indo-European family of languages. Still we must not lay to his unwillingness that which is due to the epigrammatic brevity of his style, but rather look for the sober meaning of his statement. What are the 'materials' that we are to accept from the tradition? Is it the lexicography? One would scarcely think so after reading the foot-note which he subjoins to his rendering of F. III, 31: "The translation 'acts of adoration and oblations' (of which he made use in the verse indicated) is doubtful; the words in the text are *ἄπαξ λεγόμενα*, which are traditionally translated by 'feet and breast,'" etc. If we add to this instance the many words marked

doubtful in his notes, which are only the cases in which he was willing to impeach his own work, the evident pains at which he has been to reconcile the Pahlavi and the text, we will be forced to the belief, which we might have expressed *a priori*, that the tradition consisted of a certain rendering which was given and transmitted in the bulk, but which the teachers were often at a loss to adapt closely to the individual forms and words. There would be, for all that, little danger in admitting the help of Pahlavi lexicographers. As long as the sense of a word must pass through the double crucible of comparative etymology and adaptation to the text, there can be little harm done, if also little help given, that way. If, however, by 'materials,' M. Darmesteter means,—and everything tends to prove that this is his meaning,—to accept the concrete sense, the sense in the rough, of the tradition, and to give to a certain rendering a privileged position at the gates of the Mazdean Scriptures, then we must confess our sincere disappointment. Nor is this feeling allayed by M. Darmesteter's comforting assurance that 'the more one enters into the meaning of the text, the fuller justice is done to the merits of the Pahlavi translation,' for, if it proves anything, it proves that he has deferred a little more than his predecessors to the model before him. I will not repeat all that has been said about the untrustworthiness of that translation and the low plane on which the native interpreters were placed in regard to their own books; I claim that we may and must decline such an exclusive privilege in favor of any one translation, no matter what the dialect or the age, on the plea of individual responsibility and scientific independence. The texts are placed before us not that we may see how far they agree with the Mazdeans of the IVth or Vth century of our era, but that we may, spontaneously and in all integrity, elicit their meaning. If the texts cannot be made to speak in their own behalf, if the key to them is mislaid, then let us forfeit, temporarily, all claims to having knowledge of the Avesta itself, and give all our efforts to the patient labor of deciphering these hieroglyphs. But, indeed, philology has furnished us with a grammar, the agreement of tradition with etymology has given us a partial lexicon, and it remains for individual scholars to do the rest, complete the lexicography and wrestle with the text. The Avesta has or ought to have outgrown the tutelage of tradition.

Is it possible to elicit any sense without starting from the traditional data? It would seem, on reading M. Darmesteter's Introduction, that there is no method but his. He draws, it is true,

the extravagant outlines of a nondescript which he calls 'comparative method.' The name I know, but I do not recognize the traits. I will gladly join him in condemning the view, if it now exists, that 'the Avesta and the Vedas are two echoes of one and the same thought,' and that 'the Vedas are both the best lexicon and the best commentary to the Avesta'; but, this done, I ask again: Is there not another and more sensible method? Many will think with me that there is one which aims at finding the meaning of a word by following its history in an ascending march, and might therefore be named 'comparative etymology' in contradistinction to unqualified 'comparison,' which seems to imply for M. Darmesteter a wholesale use of Vedic texts and a forced assimilation of forms, phrases and ideas. This method is identified with Vedic studies in so much only that early Sanskrit offers the first and nearest relay in the search, and that we find there, steeped in light, words and forms which bear to the words and forms of the Avesta a likeness oftentimes amounting to identity. Likeness of form,—let us bear this in mind, and not forget that phonetic identity, even when absolute, is no voucher for identity of meaning, and that, in religious nomenclatures especially, outward analogy weighs next to nothing in regard of the inner worth of words. Haug's unsuccessful attempt to graft Zend studies on Sanskrit lexicography ought to be a warning, if simple common sense did not teach as much. As M. Darmesteter says, the Vedas cannot give us the sense of a Zend word; but, though he does not say so, they give us that which in respect to verbs is decisive for the sense also, a sure clue to the root, and part of the history, of a word. I will readily admit that after a word is traced to its root, its sense is often left as vague as that of the root itself; but the work of the etymologist does not end there. He has before him the task of specifying and individualizing the general sense by the immediate context, and by comparison with other passages and with other forms of the same root, whether in the Avesta or in kindred languages, and finally, with the data of tradition which may confirm or modify his results or give him new clues. The best proof that comparative etymology does not 'move in a vacuum and build up a fanciful language' is the fact that it sometimes confirms the traditional sense and oftener corrects it; indeed, it is this confirmation which saves M. Darmesteter's work from being placed on the low level of Pahlavi glosses and gives it a modern value. If the testimony of comparison is acceptable when it confirms—and here correction is another sort of confirmation—it ought to bear the same force when it utterly con-

demns, that is to say, it is the first and last resort. It is true, nevertheless, that, though the ascending part of the process is relatively easy, the work of individualizing the sense is liable to arbitrariness. As an illustration to the point I will adduce the rendering of v. 46 in F. XIII. After a somewhat humorous comparison of the dog with a priest, a warrior and a husbandman, successively, the writer likens him to a *vaêçu*. The stem of this word is speedily traced back to *viç*, 'house' or 'village,' but not so the final stamp which is to give it its individual and local value as a word. Is it 'villager,' or 'servant,' or 'neighbor'? The context gives little help, for, apart from the divergent readings of the manuscripts, the succeeding words are as many puzzles. M. Darmesteter, walking in the steps of tradition, keeps clear of these hindrances, translates *vaêçu* 'strolling singer,' and renders thus smoothly: 'The dog is like a strolling singer, he is intrusive like a strolling singer, he is meagre like a strolling singer, he is poor like a strolling singer,' etc., which is certainly a faithful description of certain musicians of our days, and may have been of the Iranian minstrels, if such a class existed, for we have nothing but the opinion of a late commentator for that sense, and whatever force there is in etymology against it. Both Spiegel and de Harlez looked to etymology for the sense of the main word, but it is best for my purpose to bring in Geldner's rendering, which rests on the sole basis of comparison: 'The dog is like a servant, he welcomes like a servant, he devours what is within his reach like a servant, he eats in the rear of the house like a servant, (he only eats three times a day) like a servant,' etc. This sense may not be better, *in se*, than the tradition's, though, if there were strolling minstrels in those days, there may also have been in Iranian houses servants' halls where dogs and menials alike were fed; but the process through which Geldner arrives at this bit of domestic information is open to strong objections. First, he selects the easiest, and not the most accredited reading (*zairimyaçma* instead of *zairimyaçma*), a procedure not countenanced by the best exegetical methods; and, secondly, he looks for the specialization of the words, not to evidence handed by the Avesta, but by Sanskrit; the word *zairimya*, if his etymological clue is correct, cannot have another meaning except that obtained by a comparison of the radical sense and of kindred Zend words, namely 'heat' or possibly 'fire-place.'¹

¹ I surmise that the sentence means: 'like a servant he takes his abode by the fire-place,' but the discussion of *açma* or *fçma* would take us too far out of our way.

For all that, Geldner's efforts seem to me to be in the right direction. They are certainly in keeping with this elementary postulate of exegesis that words must be allowed to speak for themselves. The etymological method has failings of its own, not counting the too great weight allotted to Vedic analogues. It will be a hopeless task to harmonize any two renderings as long as one can choose arbitrarily between the many and contradictory readings offered by the manuscripts; and comparative science will fall very short of its aims, unless it be accompanied by a never-relenting scrutiny of the texts, forms and phonetic phenomena of the Avesta; but this very condition imposed upon the comparative method is also the most trusty guarantee we have that Zend studies will thrive by it.

Coming back to M. Darmesteter's own method, it is fair to say that in a passage of his Introduction (c) he avers that it rests on the Parsee tradition, 'corrected or confirmed by the comparative method.' This addition does not quite meet the case, for, even should the supplementary work confirm the first, the outcome would be no better than the Avesta rendered on the low and narrow plane of a late commentator. Still the corrective is excellent, and in hands determined to apply it most rigorously might lead to positive independence. Let us examine, then, how it has served our translator, and first, mark the peril. We all know how easy it is to make a preconceived theory agree with the facts in hand; the malleability of facts is, indeed, one of the most insidious perils that science encounters on the part of theories and theorists, and I suppose that every one has had to fight against the inner and often unavowed predilections which impair the judgment and forestall the verdict. Now, words are hardly less pliable than facts, and, in interpretation, the surest way to find a certain sense is to keep it before one's eyes, the more so if the text is in the nature of things both loose and obscure. A gentle pressure, a turn of the hand, as it were, and the text will revolve as easily as a table under spiritualistic touch. I will take as an instance the opening verses of the 1st Fargard. Tradition commented upon it in a vague and unsatisfactory manner, namely, that 'where a man is born there he sees most charms,' which is a rather singular preface to this important chapter. And this is the way M. Darmesteter worked the comment into the text: 'Ahura Mazda spake unto Spitama Zarathustra, saying: I have made every land dear to its dwellers, even though it had no charms in it: had I not made every land dear to its dwellers, even though

it had no charms whatever in it, then the whole living world would have invaded the Airyano Vaêjô.' This is certainly logical; one could not be more provident and ingenious than Ahura Mazda, nor think more like a philosophizing scholiast. When we come to the text, however, the fitness disappears; this opening opens to nothing, for no further mention is made of the love of country or its effects. One fails to see the 'every' of the rendering; then 'râmô-dâitîm,' to favor the scholiast, is translated 'dear to its dwellers,' which is an approach to the etymological sense and against the Zend tradition, while 'shâitîm,' for the same reason, is made to mean 'charms,' in agreement with the tradition and against etymology. There is no method in all this unless adhesion to native brooding be taken for one. Construing the passage as M. Darmesteter does, but keeping close to the data of comparison, one finds that it reads thus: 'I made fit to dwell in land that was in no way inhabitable: had I not made fit to dwell in land that was in no way habitable, the whole living world had invaded the Airyana Vaêjô'; and the writer proceeds to enumerate the places thus made habitable, beginning for the sake of completeness with the Airyana Vaêjô, the cradle of the Aryans, though this, in the Avesta at large as well as in the verse just quoted, is spoken of as anterior to the settlements of the Iranians, and legendary more than historical.

Of this tendency to subject the texts to a gentle traction in order to render their testimony more telling, we have already given examples, and shall have to give more. But this is not the only peril. If, as suggested previously, the transmitted sense were 'in the rough,' it might not always adapt itself to the text. Now there are instances where the text seems faulty. This is not due entirely to the copyist. In many cases it is owing to the absence of precise rules among the writers of the Avesta, though there reigns a certain method even in the midst of that confusion, as Spiegel and after him Hübschmann have judiciously observed. If, however, in the case of a conflict between the text and the tradition, the adept of the latter is tempted to justify his guide at the cost of the scribe, he has in his position a ready excuse, and therefore an inducement to take the step. This is a reproach which it were unjust to cast upon the traditional method as such. It touches all who give their first allegiance, not to the Avesta, but to some source or theory outside of it. Geldner, for instance, on the plea of metrical fitness, takes liberties with the originals which his learning can palliate but not excuse, while nothing speaks more in

favor of the version of M. de Harlez, himself a moderate partisan of tradition, than his unalloyed respect for the texts he translates. The following striking example will prove that my imputation is not unfounded in respect to our version: In F. III there is an almost lyrical moment as the writer eloquently recites the advantages of husbandry. In the midst of the strain, however, there is a passage the general drift of which is clear, but which is impaired by nearly every translator's trying to make it as figurative as possible, forgetting that the lyricism of the Mazdean must not be relied on for drawing a long breath. Here is M. Darmesteter's translation: 'He who would till the earth, O Spitama Zarathustra, with the left arm and with the right, with the right arm and with the left, unto him will she bring forth plenty, like a loving bride on her bed, unto her beloved; the bride will bring forth children, the earth will bring forth plenty of fruit!' The elegant symmetry of this passage would do honor to the taste of the original writer. Unluckily it is not the loving bride who is abed, but the bridegroom, at least the word is unmistakably masculine in form. A strict adherence to the text gives a meaning less brilliant but more in keeping with Mazdean soberness: 'He who would till the earth with the left arm and with the right . . . to him, reclining on his bespread seat, she will, as friend to friend, bring for his enjoyment her progeny and array.' This last rendering agrees in the main with both de Harlez's and Geldner's; it differs from them chiefly by taking 'friend to friend' as an adverbial phrase; those words were current as early as in the Gâthâs and seem quoted here irrespective of gender.

The illustrations we have just given concern minor points, and betray a bias rather than an offensive misapprehension of the text. In truth, I believe that the Vendidâd suffers less than other books would suffer by being rendered according to tradition, for it was more on a level with the plane of the religious views and, probably also, of the linguistic knowledge of the Pahlavi translators. Moreover, the fact that the results of both methods have come even to a distant agreement gives us a tolerable certainty that we know the drift of the book. For all that, Zend studies have not attained that point when scholarship becomes an ingenious and delicate exercise of the mind. There is a certain indomitable energy wanted in the first age of a science as well as in the early settlement of a country. To confine exegetical science, at this stage, to confirming or correcting anterior data would leave out the possibility of striking out a new

path and rejecting absolutely current errors. We find occasionally passages traditionally very clear, but of such clearness as makes us wish for the obscurity that would challenge elucidation. The lives of Zoroaster, for instance, usually begin with the statement that he was the son of Pourushaça, and born 'near the river Dareja on a high mountain,' in spite of the obvious impossibility of dwelling at the same time on the mountain above and by the river below. On inquiry we find that this last particular is borrowed from F. XIX, 4, 10. When we ask the interpreters to locate either river or mountain they plead ignorance and address us to the Bundelesh; but were the Bundelesh writer at hand, his answer to the same query would not unlikely sound like this: 'Of that river, or mountain, I have no personal knowledge, as is proved by my text, but you will find it in F. XIX of the Vendidad.' The word *darejya* which is at issue may certainly happen to be the name of a river, though the simple voucher of tradition does not carry much weight with all. It may also have happened that the native interpreters, nonplused by an unknown word, turned it as a last resort into a proper name, a surmise which is not a little strengthened by the fact that they recurred to the same summary process when they reached the following and equally puzzling word, *patizbarahi*, in which some commentators see the name of a mountain, 'Zbar.' The question is further entangled by the reappearance of those two words in a subsequent verse (XIX, 11), though there, as I think, out of their connection, and possibly by a blunder of the editors. Comparative etymology had surely never come to those geographical notions of itself. Indeed, Spiegel and Windischmann as well as Haug, in various ways and with the help of comparison, sought for, and obtained, renderings widely diverging from the traditional one, though not very apposite. That was in the early days of Zend studies. Another curious fact is that all three of them, from sheer lassitude perhaps, gave up the task, the former two returning to the rendering, or rather non-rendering of the native school, while Haug struck out a new and far less inviting path. Here is the traditional version in Spiegel's final wording. Zarathustra, beset by the evil Druj, advances, holding in his hands stones of the size of a house (according to tradition), and Ahura Mazda addresses him thus: 'Where wilt thou hold them (the stones) on this earth, the broad, round one, of distant travel? by the Dreji of the Zbar, by Pourushaça's dwelling.' This left room for a better version, and M. Darmesteter, who has worked so many wonders in favor of

tradition, might have performed one this time in behalf of the Vendidâd, but he preferred to abide by, and smooth over, the unmeaning material of his model. Despite his efforts, however, nothing will assuage the exquisite absurdity of his rendering. For him it is Ahriman who speaks: 'At what on this wide, round earth, whose ends lie afar, at what dost thou swing (those stones), thou who standest by the river Dareja, upon the mountains, in the mansion of Pourushaṣṣpa?'

This absurdity is not a slip; it seems on the contrary to be skillfully contrived to confirm the sense which his version of the whole passage tends to make out, namely, that Zoroaster is a god of light, and the river, mountain, mansion, are figures pertaining by right to the abode of the god, the heavens. The fate of M. Darmesteter's theories, however, ought not to weigh against the simple dictate of science, which is to suppose sense, not nonsense, in the texts. If there is in the Vendidâd any evidence that the common rules of logic and clearness were observed by its writers, we must reject any rendering that sins so grossly against both, and look for new clues. We might find them among those rejected too easily, after being taken up hastily by former scholars. Haug's first view that the word rendered 'mountain' (*paitizbarahi*) is a verb seems to be borne out by the symmetry of the passage and the identity of form with the preceding verb (*drazhahi*), and, if it be a verb, the word rendered by a name of river is simply an adverb or a noun in an oblique case. The etymological clue proposed by Haug (*paitizbar* = *pratihvar*) leads to nothing and must be rejected. This done, and these premises being acted upon anew, I hope that sooner or later a sense will be found that will meet the wants of both the text and logic. Pointing out the failures of many eminent scholars makes it presumptuous for me to offer my own rendering, yet this much can be surmised. If Westergaard's reading (*vandemnδ*) is adopted for the clause immediately preceding, then our verse contains the tenor of Zoroaster's invocation to Mazda, which itself may be outlined thus: 'Where art thou who holdest him (Ahriman) fast on this earth, the much travelled, round, wide-reaching one, and defendest with might the house of Pourushaṣṣpa?' (*zbarahi* I take to be connected with *spar*, to fight, in Zend *ṣpar* or *zbar*).

This adaptation on M. Darmesteter's part to the tameness of native comments is not owing to a lack of scientific boldness; only his energy has found its way into other channels than the slow

processes of comparative etymology. There is, in fact, in his version another feature than the traditional leaning, one which gives it a peculiar place in Zend studies. We mentioned at the outset the singular allotment made to tradition and the Vedas respectively: the former is to give us the materials, the latter the 'understanding' of the Avesta. One might object that going to the Vedas seems a long journey out, that we have the best sense of the Avesta in the older books, that sober reason recommends the interpretation of a religious book by the spirit of the religion itself, and, finally, that exotic light should not be let in until all the light within has proved insufficient. If all this, or part of this, occurred to M. Darmesteter, it was unheeded, for we find ourselves driven from one to the other horn of his pitiless dilemma: tradition or the Vedas. This intrusion of Vedism does not seem at first to harmonize with the claims of the partisans of tradition that Zend studies are to keep aloof from outside influences and form a self-supporting branch of oriental learning. The fact that both auxiliaries, though from opposite directions, favor the mythical import of Mazdeism may explain their momentary alliance, for it has become the characteristic purpose of M. Darmesteter's works to prove that the Iranians had a mythology but no religion. A few years ago he prepared the way for his version by a work on 'Ormazd and Ahriman,' which was meant to establish, in a most sweeping argument and with an interesting display of erudition, that the Mazdean gods, beliefs, nay Zoroaster himself, were nothing but parts of the Iranian version of the favorite myth of Vedism, the fire-myth. Some exceptions were taken to this view. It was claimed that Mazdeism was too massive, too eminently original, to be explained by anything but an *ex parte* development, and that the oldest parts of the Avesta pointed to a moment in the religion when a new spirit had made irruption and changed the course of Iranian thought. The only effect of these objections, which M. Darmesteter otherwise briefly acknowledges, is seen in the increased precision with which he reiterates his statements; for him 'the gods, the ideas, the worship of Mazdeism are shown to emanate directly from the old religion,' *i. e.*, the fire-myth (p. lxxix). Indeed, so absolute is his denegation of the spontaneity of Iranian beliefs, so great his care to stop all loopholes through which any characteristic thought might find access into Mazdeism as he views it, that we are startled when in one place we find him speaking of 'the moral and abstract spirit which pervades Mazdeism and is so different from the Vedic spirit,' and in another of 'the new spirit that

breathed in the religion.' Yet, surely, the spirit that breathes in the Avesta must once have been a new spirit. We need no other witness to that effect than the Vendidâd itself, in the very version we discuss. Its manly enforcement of probity and honest work, its copious rules of purification and atonement, all points to a current of thoughts better than naturalism: it is a system of morals, turned serene as all systems will when the spirit is at its ebb, but its nobleness stands out amid the puerile fancies of the age. Nor is this moral feature peculiar to our book. The teachings of generations had so impressed it on the vast nation of Mazdean believers as to make it the national stamp, to which the early Greek travellers uniformly bear witness. In truth, the moment Mazdeism emerges from obscurity the myths recede, theology is raised above the swarming confusion of naturalism, and moral ends take the place of grovelling superstition. Placed in their natural connection, the Vendidâd and the old hymns represent a fabric of spiritual doctrines so closely framed that the wearing influences of several ages and nations will be needed before naturalism breaks through it and mixes its flimsy threads with the decaying tissue. Unless the testimony of the older Avesta be proved unreliable, and unless it be shown that myths by sheer decrepitude turn to ethics, I shall keep to the belief that the morals of Mazdeism and its early theology were born together, spontaneously, and once 'turned the stream' of Iranian thoughts into a purer bed.

M. Darmesteter has taken pains, both in his Introduction and in his notes, to prick the long streak of fire which marks the evolutions of the storm-myth in the Avesta. His version does not seem at first to present the tinge which strongly colored surroundings might be supposed to give it, for, in reality, though the mythical element is by no means absent from the Vendidâd, it is evidently additional, accumulated in places, and might be struck out without altering the general impression produced by the book. On close examination, however, one sees that there is a mythical as well as a traditional bias. In the first Fargard which gives, as the tradition and most scholars believe, the sum of the geographical data of the Avesta, he sees under no less than three or four of the countries mentioned the mythical land on high where light gods wrestle with dark demons, an opinion which is sufficiently refuted, I think, by the fact that he grants to the twelve or thirteen others a geographical status; nor, when there is a doubt, are we kept long in suspense as to the ultimate determination of the sense. In F. V, 8, the

question, most interesting for the Mazdean believer in the purity of Ahura's creation, is raised by Zoroaster whether water kills. Our translator gives Ahura's answer as follows: 'Water kills no man; *astôvidhōtu* ties the noose around his neck, and thus tied, Vaya carries him off; then the flood takes him up, the flood takes him down, the flood throws him ashore; then birds feed upon him, and chance brings him here or brings him there.' This is a very smooth version, but let us examine. *Astôvidhōtu*, the bone-breaker, is an Avestic creation easily understood without the help of the Vedas; the sleight of hand through which the writer creates an analogy to Vedic Yama, the king of death, translating arbitrarily 'ties the noose around his neck' a verb that simply means 'ties,' was more than superfluous; yet he has done more, he has enriched the Iranian mythology with a new god, for, though there is a Vayu mentioned in divers places, there is no voucher for the Vaya of our passage. Here is, on the other side, Geldner's version: 'Water does not kill man, but the bone-breaker fetters him and the current (Vayas) carries him away bound; the water draws him upwards, then downwards, and throws him out; then the birds eat him up; his self lands beyond.'

The second Fargard contains the Vendidad version of the legend of Yima (and, as many believe, of the deluge), an episode which suggests more problems than I have room even to mention. That it is an echo of an old Aryan myth is now a matter of common consent, nor is it lacking in the Iranian native note. It is furthermore possible that Semitic intercourse had its share in making up the tradition. To mark out the exact part those three possible factors have borne in the shaping of the legend is a most delicate task, and one which requires a mind free from any one-sided interest in the results; the first step, at any event, is to let the Avesta speak, without swaying it this or that way according as one is inclined. I will not, of course, magnify the gentle touch of M. Darmesteter's pen into a gross assault on the texts, yet even that touch, at a given moment, imprints on a passage the stamp needed to fix the sense. Thus, among others, the 10th verse is translated with more or less precision, thus: 'Then Yima stepped forward towards the light on the sun's noon-day path,' or, 'went forward in the light of day, at noon time, on the sun's path.' Whither he went, southwards or westwards, matters but little. M. Darmesteter renders: 'Then Yima stepped forward towards the luminous space, southwards to meet the sun,' a turn which certainly is not in strict accordance with

the text, and is obviously intended to fix more firmly on Yima's brow the bright diadem of a sun-god, if, at least, we understand the foot-note which ends with the words : ' In Mazdean mythology the sun is, as is well known, the symbol and source of royalty.'

With the preceding example my task is over; I have said enough to justify my conclusions. At the first glance, this work is a bright and spirited rendering of a book which was not held to be either, and bids fair to win for it and also for Iranian studies the attention of the reading public. If the chief aim of the translator was to bring out in the strongest light the best sense to be elicited from tradition he has been eminently successful; the outcome, however, seems to us an honor paid to the native commentators rather than the simple and direct interpretation of the Vendidâd, which we had a right to expect. As far as the sub-interpretation of the texts by the naturalistic myth is concerned, I cannot but acknowledge the frankness and skill with which the writer has avowed and championed his views. There is perhaps more truth in them than is apparent to me. Time will decide. To take them, however, out of the Introduction, and weave them through the rendering before they have risen from the hypothetical stage, seems to me an unwarranted way of gaining for them, under cover and at the expense of the Mazdean books, an adhesion and a tribute which otherwise had been denied.

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